

August 28, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

ISSUES TO BE SETTLED WITH GENERAL CLAY

There are two sets of issues here.

1. The first set is procedural and quite easy. Who does Clay command and who does he report to? He should obviously be the Senior American in Berlin -- and his seniority may give him a certain leverage on the British and French Commandants, at a moment of crisis. I believe he should report directly to the Secretary of State and to you with information to Dowling and to the military. He should leave all routine military channels alone, but for command decisions he should have full control of the Berlin garrison. This is not perfect from Norstad's point of view, but it is good from yours.

2. The second set of issues is more subtle. Clay is a soldier, but opinion is sharply divided on his ability to carry out a policy set by others, unless he fully agrees with it. You want no risk of setting up another MacArthur-Truman affair. Even without any public explosion, (which I think unlikely) Clay will be a burden to you if he takes a line more belligerent than yours: an intelligent Drumright or a powerful Lightner would be made use of by firebugs like Maggie Higgins.

What makes this urgent is that the main line of thought among those who are now at work on the substance of our negotiating position is that we can and should shift substantially toward acceptance of the GDR, the Oder-Neisse line, a non-aggression pact, and even the idea of two peace treaties. All of these have been unpalatable to the West Germans, though opinion is shifting. Even "occupation rights" seem less important, we find, when you ask about their long-term value. We are inclined instead to focus attention on

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the three fundamentals of freedom for Berlin, free access, and a Western presence, in that order -- and resting the "Western presence" on the fact that West Berlin wants us. You may not adopt this line, but I think you want to be able to decide as freely as possible when the time for decision comes (fairly soon.) There will be some criticism of any such position, and for this reason Clay's view is very important. If he's with us, he can be a major political protection, and I think no real domestic complaint would arise. If he were strongly against us, from the vantage point of West Berlin, the situation might be less satisfactory. Right now you have great freedom of maneuver on Berlin, here at home; you don't want to give anyone a mortgage on that freedom.

So what you need to find out Tuesday afternoon is whether Clay is with you on the political issues. Maybe you are tougher than the line of thought I have sketched, and maybe Clay is not inflexible (McCloy is an old friend of Germany, and he seems ready for a new policy). But it's not something to take for granted.

McG. B.

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